

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT TACOMA

CHERYL SANLIN,

Plaintiff,

v.

CENTRAL KITSAP SCHOOL DISTRICT,
a Washington Corporation,

Defendant.

Case No.

**PLAINTIFF'S COMPLAINT and
JURY DEMAND**

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. Jurisdiction of this court is invoked pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331. This action is authorized and instituted pursuant to 29 U.S.C. § 2617(a).

2. The employment practices alleged to be unlawful were committed within the jurisdiction of the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington of Tacoma.

3. In May 2020, Plaintiff filed a charge of discrimination against Defendant with the Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education. In June 2020, the Department of Education transferred Plaintiff's charge to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC") in Seattle, Washington.

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1 4. On August 25, 2020, the EEOC issued a right-to-sue letter.

2 **PARTIES**

3 5. Plaintiff is a resident of Kitsap County, Washington.

4 6. Defendant is a public school district located in Kitsap County, Washington.

5 **FACTS**

6 7. Plaintiff is an African-American female. She has been employed by Central Kitsap
7 School District as a certificated music teacher since 1994. She works at Hawk Elementary at
8 Jackson Park (“HEJP”).

9 8. In September 2019, Plaintiff filed a complaint of racial discrimination with the
10 Defendant’s Human Resources department, primarily based on conduct by the school principal,
11 Chris Visserman. In response, Defendant hired an investigator, Jessie Harris, to investigate
12 Plaintiff’s allegation. Harris concluded that the conduct Plaintiff complained of did not amount
13 to harassment or discrimination.

14 9. Plaintiff appealed this determination to the School Board pursuant to Defendant’s
15 procedure. There was a hearing on December 11, 2019, during which Defendant’s Assistant
16 Superintendent of Human Resources, Jeanne Beckon, shared Investigator Jessie Harris’s stated
17 opinion that Plaintiff complaints about her treatment was the cause of a staff morale problem at
18 HEJP.

19 10. On January 23, 2020, Assistant Superintendent Beckon directed Plaintiff not to
20 contact either the principal or assistant principal at HEJP. Plaintiff was told she could
21 communicate only with Jill Carlson, Direct of Elementary Teaching and Learning, and Ms.
22 Beckon herself.
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1 11. On January 29, 2020, Assistant Superintendent met with Plaintiff, and informed her
 2 that Defendant had “concerns” about Plaintiff’s mental health and that she was being directed
 3 to undergo a psychological evaluation. The conduct identified by Ms. Beckon as “concerning”
 4 included the hurt feelings of staff against whom Plaintiff had complained; Plaintiff’s emailing
 5 colleagues or administrators late at night; and one student’s unprompted assertion that Plaintiff
 6 “doesn’t like” the students. Ms. Beckon informed Plaintiff that, based on Defendant’s
 7 “concerns,” Plaintiff was being placed on administrative leave immediately, and that she would
 8 remain on leave until it was determined that she was “fit” to teach. While on leave, Plaintiff
 9 was required to turn over her school keys, banned from district events, not allowed on school
 10 property, and forbidden to communicate with District students, staff, or parents. She was
 11 permitted to communicate only with Assistant Superintendent Beckon, and only by telephone
 12 or email.

13
 14 12. As a result of the forced administrative leave and being required to undergo a
 15 “fitness-for-duty” psychological examination, Plaintiff experienced severe emotional distress,
 16 extreme anxiety, and high-blood pressure.

17 **CLAIMS**

18 13. Retaliation—Title VII. Defendant unlawfully retaliated against Plaintiff for her
 19 protected activity of filing a discrimination complaint, in violation of 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-3(a).

20 14. Plaintiff reserves the right to amend or supplement her complaint to include other
 21 facts or claims, as necessary.
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PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays:

1. That she have judgment against Defendant for all compensatory damages, including but not limited to, any claim for back and front pay and benefits;
2. That she be awarded prejudgment interest;
3. That she be awarded damages for humiliation, emotional distress, loss of enjoyment of life, pain and suffering, personal indignity, embarrassment, fear, anxiety, and anguish, in an amount to be proven at trial;
4. That the court award equitable relief, as appropriate;
5. That the court award attorney's fees and actual costs; and
6. For such other and further relief as this court deems just and equitable.

JURY TRIAL DEMAND

Plaintiff Cheryl Sanlin hereby requests a jury trial on all questions of fact raised by her complaint.

DATED this ____ day of November, 2020.

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